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An Intricate Collage



Marianne Roth



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THE "WRITE YOUR STORY" COLLECTION

AN INTRICATE COLLAGE

Marianne Roth



Makor Jewish Community Library
2000

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DEDICATION

*In loving memory of my parents
Margarethe and Eugen Freund
and grand-daughter Miriam.*

*For my daughters Evelyn and Vivienne,
son-in-law Ruben and brother Hans Friend.*

*For my grandchildren Rebecca and David,
Isaac and wife Rebecca,
Noah and wife Timna and Dahlia,
and great-grandson Aryeh.*

*It is for you who are so dear to me
that I have written this book.*

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INTRODUCTION

When I look back at my life, I can compare it to one of the intricate collages I sometimes create. It contains serenity, beauty and contentment and also fear, grief and terrible loss. All lives, like art works, have their light and shadow, but as a child of the twentieth century, my losses of a home, a community, and both parents came, not through ordinary circumstances, but through the Second World War. All in all, I lost sixty members of my family ... And yet, there is much to be grateful for. My brother Hans and I emerged from the brink of destruction through the kindness of many people. I thought that I could not go on, but my thriving Australian family of ten — wonderful daughters, son in-law, grandchildren and a great-grandchild — testifies that somehow I found the courage to rebuild my life.

I have always wanted to write about my past, but never knew how to begin. Then I joined the "Write Your Story" program. Now, my story is written and it has been a very special, although at times, painful experience for me. Over a period of two years, I have allowed myself to relive my life in Germany and as a refugee in Australia. It has put me in touch with many memories I thought I had forgotten. Facing my worst memories has helped me come to terms with them and reliving my good ones has given me a lot of comfort. I have just celebrated my eightieth birthday, which is probably a good time to write an autobiography. I hope that my accumulated years have granted

me the perspective that comes only with hindsight.

What has particularly struck me is the extent to which my daughters have been my friends, my inspiration, and even my role models. I will mention only a few examples at this point and let the story reveal the rest. It was Evelyn's advice and urgings that led to me becoming a teacher. As a result, I was fortunate to enjoy many years of professional satisfaction and to develop my skills as an artist. Vivienne's love of nature is a special bond we share and it has encouraged me to immerse myself in the practical pleasure of working in the garden and the painting of landscapes, flowers and Still Life. Latterly, Evelyn's perseverance in publishing her fine book *Bully Busting* has given me confidence to do likewise.

MY PARENTS

My childhood was a happy one. I was born in Germany and grew up with my younger brother Hans in fortunate circumstances. We had wonderful parents who gave us lots of love and attention and also gentle discipline, gifts that we would carry with us for the rest of our lives. My mother Margarethe Cecilie, called Gretl, was born on 1 March, 1893, in Gleiwitz in Upper Silesia, Germany. My father, Eugen, was born 4 October 1885 in Neu Heiduk, also in Upper Silesia. They lived within an hour's journey by train from each other, but their backgrounds were quite dissimilar.

Gretl came from a very privileged background. Her mother, Amalie, was a statuesque woman with a commanding presence, made less daunting by her good humour. I can never remember her saying an angry word to anyone. Her father, Emil Goldhammer, was kind and generous and she adored him. He was shorter than his wife and had reddish hair. Gretl and her brother Kurt lived a typical middle-class life with all its privileges. Her parents had a large produce store that sold wheat, barley, corn, sugar and other goods that came from the local peasants. They were quite well off and the children were given the best education available at that time. Gretl finished the local girls' high school and was then sent to a *Pensionat*, a finishing school in Berlin, where she perfected among other subjects, piano, French and English. She later studied nursing and while still single, acted

in that capacity during the First World War.

My father was the ninth and youngest child of Cecilie and Herman Freund. He had seven sisters and a brother, but three of the girls died in early childhood. Herman Freund had a small grocery shop. He died very young so it was fortunate that his widow was energetic and efficient. She managed the home and business with great skill, although things were never easy for her. There was a special bond between Eugen and his mother. In fact, he was her favourite. She admired his intelligence and capacity for hard work. From an early age, he had a deep sense of responsibility towards his mother and sisters. There was very little money for his education, but by gaining scholarships and giving private lessons to other students, he completed high school and then university with a Doctorate in Higher Mathematics.

In 1912, he received his qualifications to enable him to teach high school mathematics, physics, chemistry and mineralogy. During the following four years, when other young men were conscripted and sent to serve in the First World War, he was working in Freiburg and Konigshuette as an assistant teacher. He had been rejected because of his extreme myopia. In April 1916, he received a permanent position in Oppeln, in Upper Silesia close to the Czechoslovakian border and was to stay there for the next seventeen years. He married my mother in 1919. Gretl had been engaged before, but like many young women on both sides of the conflict, had lost her fiance in the war. She never talked about it and I was startled when I heard about it for the first time several years ago, at a family reunion in San Francisco. Since then, I have discovered from my American relatives that his name was Siegfried Nothman, and he was her second cousin. They had been told that he was wounded in

battle and died in a field hospital clutching Gretl's photograph. I am left to wonder why my mother never referred to this sad event in her life. She was a very open person, but perhaps she was being protective of my father, not wishing to give the impression that she had any regrets. There is no doubt that their marriage was a very happy one.

MY GRANDPARENTS AND FAMILY

When thinking about my grandparents, I recall only my two grandmothers clearly. My paternal grandfather had died long before I was born and Mother's father died when I was four years old.

I would like to describe my mother's mother. Amalie was fairly tall, a big woman with a formidable bosom. She was capable and bossy and definitely wore the pants in the family.

She had four brothers. Julius was the eldest. He and his wife Hede lived in Breslau. She was pleasant, ugly and came with a large dowry. Uncle Julius was genial and very good looking, supposedly very much like Charles Boyer to look at. It was said that he married for money, and if so, it isn't always a bad thing. They had a very pleasant life together. They had a big dog, a mastiff, but no children. Next came Albert and Fritz who had been triplets at birth, but one had died. They lived in Gross Strehlitz and worked in the family business. Fritz had a clubfoot and remained a bachelor, but Albert's wife Wanda took on the responsibility of looking after him. He was a pleasant man who loved his food and drink. The fourth, Willy, had a wine and spirit shop in Gross-Strehlitz, and had a good-looking wife called Mehta.

Amalie must have grieved for her only son, Kurt. He was in a home for the mentally disturbed. We children almost never heard the grown ups talking of him, and if then, only in whispers. He was apparently a brilliant young man who had suffered a nervous breakdown while studying law. I believe during the war, right at

the beginning in 1939, all inmates of mental institutions were killed. I'm sure that is what happened to him.

My father's mother, Cecilie was a small, slim, delicate woman. She dressed mainly in black because she was a widow. I have fond memories of her in a black satin dress with a lace collar, her face lovely and kind, and her hair in a chignon. She had brown eyes and looked almost like "The Portrait of Whistler's Mother" but not so severe. In fact she smiled a lot. She always wore a red garnet bracelet with a beautiful clasp. The Nazis allowed me to bring it with me to Australia, since the stones were only semi-precious and I have been pleased to pass this family heirloom onto my eldest daughter Evelyn.

Grandmother Freund lived close to us with her son, Max. She and her friends met at the Friedrichs Park opposite our apartment every afternoon. When we were little, Hans and I were taken by our Nanny to visit her and we always knew exactly where to find her, since she occupied the same bench. Grandmother Freund would greet us warmly and show us off to her friends. I would execute a nice curtsy and Hans would offer them a formal nod, a *diener*. Grandmother would then open the big black bag she always carried, and offer us the lollies that we knew were waiting for us.

I shall never forget Father's grief on the day she died in February 1927. It was the only time I saw him cry. I recall all our mirrors being covered by white towels to signify that a death had occurred in the family, and it made a great impression on me. Thereafter, I was taken by my father every Sunday to visit his mother's grave. He would sometimes take my brother too. I recall that the grave was covered with ivy. I remember these walks with fondness rather than with any sense of sorrow. Father took the

opportunity on these walks to entertain and educate me with many facts of science, religion, botany and astronomy. He had an inquiring mind and he tried to pass his passion for knowledge to us from the time we were young.

Uncle Max was our favourite uncle. He was a tobacco merchant. His first wife had died in childbirth, leaving him with a baby daughter, Helga. So he married her sister, Grete. She was a good mother to Helga and later had a son, Heinz. She was a good business woman. Max had a great sense of humour and told lots of jokes. Hans and I loved him and everybody else did too. Whenever he visited us, it was a treat. He brought us sweets, told funny stories and made everybody feel light-hearted. Whenever Mother would send our maid to the butcher for a knuckle of veal, we knew that Uncle Max was coming. This was his favourite dinner, especially the way my mother cooked it. He looked so much like my father that he was sometimes mistaken for him, even though Father was a much more serious person. Max used to complain that he could not walk down the street without Father's students taking him for their teacher. They would respectfully raise their caps to him, which obliged him to raise his hat in return. In winter, he assured us mournfully, his poor, balding head would freeze!

Besides my father and his brother Max, there were sisters, all married. I recall my father sending a cheque every month to his eldest sister, Emma Badrian, to help her when she was widowed young. Whenever there was a family get-together, Father's sisters visited us or we visited them. This meant going by train to Breslau where they lived or they visiting us in Oppeln. I enjoyed train travel. I loved watching the landscape go by, observing fir forests, tended fields of corn, people, cattle - a kaleidoscope of colour.

MY BIRTHPLACE – OPPELN

Oppeln, in my day, was a small town of 45,000 inhabitants, mainly Catholic with some Protestants and six hundred Jews. I recall two major churches, one Catholic and one Protestant, but there were many monasteries and convents in the district.

There was a beautiful synagogue with several cupolas that served the whole Jewish community. Men and women sat separately, the women upstairs. A young woman with a beautiful soprano voice would occasionally sing to the whole congregation from a balcony alcove.

I recall being told that after the First World War there was a plebiscite in Silesia on whether the population wanted to belong to Poland or Germany. My parents voted, like the majority, for Germany. Although they lived on the border with Poland, their cultural roots were entirely German. Another war, another change of borders! Today it belongs to Poland and has been renamed Opole. I'm sure that the inhabitants, this time, were not asked for their opinion.

I remember it as a charming medieval town with a castle. The Piasten, a ducal family, built the castle in the fourteenth century although Opeln has been in existence for over a thousand years. It had fallen to various conquerors over the centuries, including the Mongols in 1241. It was won and lost in treaties, and at different times was under Austrian and Prussian rule. Despite plundering, fires and floods, it survived, but like most European

cities today it has been choked and conquered by the motor car.

During my childhood it was a peaceful place. Surrounding the castle, there was parkland and a lake where people came for recreation - to meet, stroll, row boats and in winter, to ice-skate to music played over a loudspeaker. There was a little restaurant with a view where you could enjoy coffee and cake. One memorable day the famous Norwegian skater, Sonja Henie, came to give one performance of her brilliant figure skating. She was only a teenager then, but was already on her way to becoming a Hollywood star.

There is the "Ring", a circular area in the centre of town around which are to be found the beautiful baroque buildings that housed the most fashionable shops. There, you could buy expensive white goods, rugs and clothing. What I remember best from my childhood, are the chocolate shop and the marvellous toyshop that had a little wooden man tapping with a stick on the window. The centre of the Ring was a marketplace covered in centuries-old cobblestones. Once a week, the peasants used to bring their fresh produce and my mother would take me there to buy vegetables, fruit and eggs. The delicious cottage cheese would come home wrapped in clean cabbage leaves.

Oppeln is situated on the river Oder, which has been historically a very important waterway. Long barges laden with coal, wood, salt, leather, woven cloth and farm produce would ply their way to Breslau, (now called Wroclaw) and beyond. To do so, they had to negotiate a large number of locks, one of which was not far from our home. There was a busy port within the area of the lock that had been built in 1913, where the level of water would rise and fall according to need. A feeder railway would come right up to the water to deliver and pick up cargo.

When my brother and I were quite small, our nanny would take us, on what seemed then a long two or three kilometre walk, to see this wonder of technology. It was a source of awe and endless fascination for us. In my home town there was a lot of industry, mainly cement works, and I imagine that sacks of cement were part of the river cargo.

The river has special significance for me because it was there that I learnt how to swim. Mother was ahead of her time in thinking that it would be a useful skill to acquire. She herself was a swimmer. Hans and I were taught by a male teacher at a small sandy cove, in a village near Oppeln called Czarnowanz. I was eight years old. Very few children were taught how to swim, which is not surprising, since there were only about two months of really warm weather. A special device was put around my chest. It was like a harness and connected to a rope, which was attached to a long stick. I learnt the arm movements while the swimming teacher held the angle rod or stick. After a few practices in the water, he untied the harness and I was on my own swimming breast-stroke. I was frightened and not at all ready, but I stayed afloat.

MY FIRST FEW YEARS

I was born on 26 September 1920. My parents chose a hospital rather than a home birth, a decision that was considered radical at the time, but taken because they preferred having a doctor rather than a midwife in attendance. I was born weighing seven pounds and was called Marianne Chajah after my great grandmother Nothman. My parents called me "Mariandl" and I was thought to resemble my grandfather Goldhammer. When I was ten days old, my mother and I were blessed at our synagogue.

A nice sunny room with a balcony was assigned to me and apparently I behaved myself from the start. When hungry, I would cry, "La la" so, for quite a time, Father called me "The Little La". After two weeks my parents invited eight little girls, two or three years older than me, for afternoon coffee and cake. Father gave a little speech introducing me to my "new girlfriends". My parents enjoyed a busy social life with many Jewish and non-Jewish friends and it appears that they were setting me up to follow in their footsteps.

These details, and many others covering my first six years, have been recorded in a baby book that is still in my possession. The writing is in tiny and faultless copperplate, mostly in my father's hand but with a few entries by my mother as well. It contains no less than four locks of my hair, tracking the change in colour from blonde to a deepening chestnut as I grew from

infancy. There are also three samples of my handwriting in German and Hebrew and some drawings, all demonstrating the improvement in my penmanship year by year. Today as I read these pages from so long ago, I am moved to tears, not by the details of my early childhood, but by the devotion of my parents that shines through every word. My brother has a similar book. They loved us equally.

Many facts are crammed into this little book, most of them of interest only to me, but they also offer valuable insights into how the family interacted. For instance, my mother writes that at six months, I was taken for my first trip to Gleiwitz to visit my grandparents who loved having me and spoilt me terribly. She dressed me in practical clothes for the journey, knowing that her mother would buy me a number of beautiful outfits.

On 9 December 1921, my brother Hans was born. Since there are not quite fifteen months between us, I don't remember what it was like to be without him. During 1921 and 1922 my parents took in a billet from the French Occupation Forces. This was after the Treaty of Versailles. He was very polite and my parents didn't mind having him in the house. They enjoyed practicing their French on him. The following April, Father took my nursemaid Erna and me to Gleiwitz and left us with my grandparents again for a few weeks. Arriving back in Oppeln, I did not recognize my parents and called them Oma and Opa. In August 1922, my mother's father, Emil Goldhammer, passed away. My second birthday a month later was, as a result, celebrated quietly. Oma came from Gleiwitz. Soon, she sold her home and business and came to Oppeln permanently to be close to us. She rented an apartment nearby. It had heavy velvet curtains with bobbles along one side, part of the typical Edwardian interior and so

fashionable then. She loved being at our place for Shabbat and festivals. My father, I recall, always treated her with respect. We children loved her but were less respectful. We played numerous practical jokes on her and she never told on us, because she believed that, "Children will be children". She was a good sport and didn't even complain when we put potatoes under her sheet. In fact, she had a good chuckle.

GROWING UP

We lived in an apartment on the second floor on Moltke Strasse 17, with a balcony overlooking the Friedrichs Park. Most families lived in apartment houses and rented them by the month. The balcony was our favourite place in good weather. In spring, the flower boxes were full of petunias and there were two wicker chairs for our use. Hans kept his white mouse in a small cage there as well. We had an excellent overview of the park, with its beautiful Art Deco fountain in the centre containing large figures of Neptune and other Hellenic gods. Inviting lawns surrounded the fountain, but nobody ever walked or sat on them. It was forbidden and there were plenty of notices to remind us to stay on the pathways. There were many benches to sit on instead.

Life in our small town was pleasant. We had friendly neighbours and I recall playing with their children in the sandpit in the corner of our ugly, grey cement yard. A more attractive alternative for our games was the small garden with its lilac tree and its flowerbeds, its swing and hammock. I remember at about six being asked by the children if I was Evangelisch or Katholisch. I answered, "Neither, I'm Judisch," and they asked, "What is Judisch?" Since it was too difficult to explain, the matter was dropped. Seven years later, Hitler came to power and started his vicious indoctrination. Soon, even little children were poisoned by his lies.

Father spent his life teaching at the high school and privately

as well. Mother did the cooking, shopping and helped our maid with the cleaning. The maid occupied a small room next to the kitchen which had a gas stove, a wood stove, a sink and a table for our maid to prepare the food and to eat there too. There was no refrigerator, only an icebox for summer. In winter, perishable food was left on the window ledge. When our maid was wanted, Mother would ring the bell to ask her to clear the table. When we had guests, she had to wear a black dress with a white starched apron and a starched band of white lace to keep her hair in place. We had our main meal at midday as was the custom and a light meal in the evening. My parents frequently invited guests, mostly in the evening, but occasionally, ladies would come for afternoon tea. Mother would prepare open sandwiches on French sticks with anchovy butter, chopped eggs or herring, followed by dainty and delicious petits fours. After dinner, Father would either prepare lessons or lectures for school or correct students' homework. Mother would help us with our homework, mend socks, sew or read. Hans and I would do our homework and then go to bed. At ten o'clock, Mother prepared a little supper for father to eat, because he needed to "feed" his stomach ulcer. It was usually some compote or a sugar egg – a raw egg beaten with sugar.

Mother loved her linen press. It was a big wardrobe with deep shelves and beautifully made. It had three doors of light wood, each inlaid in the centre with black wood set in an elegant design. All the sheets and pillow cases were neatly folded in stacks and tied together with purple satin ribbons that could be released with press studs. Mother was very proud of her beautiful bed linen, tablecloths and banquet cloths. Almost reverently, she carried the keys to it round her waist, not trusting its contents to

anybody else. She delighted in setting the table beautifully with cups, saucers and matching cake plates, each cup having a different flower motif designed by Meissen. She would place a hand-crocheted doily on each of these precious plates and a crystal plate would be placed on top for the savouries. Of course, a beautiful hand-embroidered cloth and matching napkins from her trousseau would add to the sense of occasion.

Once a month on a Sunday my father would invite Mother, Hans and me for lunch at the Railway Restaurant. This was a real treat. Our maid would go to church so Mother allowed herself a restful day too. Sunday afternoons, our parents would take us on outings by train or bus to the surrounding countryside or to a nearby park. We usually ended up in a little restaurant where we were treated to lemonade and cake. These outings were a great delight to Hans and me. I could sense how relaxed my parents became when we were in the countryside.

I fondly remember what a handsome couple my parents were. Father was slim, dark-haired and distinguished-looking, Mother was tall, with a rounded figure, a lovely complexion and blond wavy hair. I was proud of their good looks, but responded with love to their devotion to each other and to us. Our upbringing left little to be desired.

We were always included in their daily activities. For instance, the physics and chemistry laboratory at my father's high school was my second nursery. From the age of four, I recall going with Father on many a Sunday to his school and setting up experiments for the students for Monday. I felt grown up when I was allowed to help him. He had a big library and whenever I asked questions, be they about science, botany, reproduction or whatever interested me, he would take out a book from his

bookshelf and show me examples and illustrations. He would explain everything in a simple manner, so that I would understand. I recall biology books with intriguing illustrations, and botany books with fascinating drawings. As far as I know, no question went unanswered. He even let me see books of the First World War and previous battles, even though I found them distressing.

My mother spoke French and English even more fluently than my father, and was a fine pianist. She played often. When Hans and I were little, it was a pre-bedtime treat for Mother to play for us and sing nursery rhymes and beautiful melodies from light operas. She dressed well with very little money, getting frocks made by our home dressmaker. We lived as well as we did on a schoolmaster's salary because she was such a skilled manager, which meant that we were never extravagant. Clothes were often remodelled to keep up with current fashion rather than discarding them and getting something new. She sewed well. She often made dresses for me and seemed to enjoy it, but it may have been to save money. My father was very modest in his tastes. He dressed neatly, but never spent much money on clothes, either.

Mother taught me to cook and how to look after my clothes. When spring came, she would hang out her winter clothes on the washing line to air. She would beat them with a special cane and then would put mothballs into the pockets so they would withstand the moths for another season. I was taught to be houseproud. I recall how, with a fine brush, I would dust our beautiful carved Fugger furniture. It was worthy of becoming a family heirloom, but in 1938, we had to sell it for very little to German Nazis returning from South America. I also often dusted

the carpet with a little hand broom, then with a large comb, I would straighten the fringes of the Persian rugs. I recall being given the task of making ice cream by turning a handle on a special machine for half an hour or so. Sometimes Father helped to shell peas for the midday lunch.

A washerwomen came every third week, and the washing was done in the cellar using steaming coppers and a large manually-operated mangle. Clothes would dry in the attic and took weeks to dry in the cold weather. Mother was a keen tennis player and I was offered the job of ironing her tennis clothes for extra pocket money.

But all was not hard work. Mother loved parties, entertaining and dining with friends. She was a superb cook. I recall one special event, a fancy dress ball. She wore a costume depicting 'Steps', the name of a famous poem by Morgenstern. Her dress was of painted canvas with steps painted on it in various shades of blue. The top of the dress was plain. It was the skirt that had steps on the front and on the back. I can't recall who painted it for her. I only remember how lovely she looked.

RELIGIOUS OBSERVANCE

On Friday nights my father would take me to the synagogue, wearing his top hat and tailcoat. He was much respected, as was our Rabbi, Dr. Braunschweiger, who was a relative, since he had married Mother's cousin and best friend, Liese.

Then we would come home to the best meal of the week. The table would be set with a crisp white damask cloth, the Sabbath candles and with the best silver cutlery. I would use some of my pocket money to buy flowers for Mother and they were usually placed in the centre of the table. There were always guests, mostly family. Father made kiddush with the home-made challah and the wine. He would lay his hands on my head and then on Hans' and would recite the blessing, "The Lord bless thee and keep thee, the lord make his face to shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee: the Lord turn his face unto thee, and give thee peace." For me this was a solemn and comforting moment.

A typical meal was chicken or beef noodle soup, then the meat from the soup served with a delicious parsley, mustard or dill sauce and boiled vegetables such as spinach and crumbed and browned cauliflower. Of course, potatoes were always part of German cuisine, either whole or mashed. Occasionally, we had fish, pike or flounder, which were considered great delicacies. For dessert we had compote made from fresh or dried fruit. No cake or hot beverages were served on these occasions. Father always brought the chocolate-covered ginger strips for Shabbat that my

mother loved. They were her special treat, but she would offer us one or two.

Purim was the festival when children wore fancy dress. I was in awe of Rabbi Braunschweiger, but he was very thoughtful and kind. Once, he made me a Purim costume. He constructed out of wooden sticks a Purim dreidel - a spinning top. It was shaped like a cube and was covered in white calico with black, shiny Hebrew letters stuck on each side. The cube was hollow in the middle so that I could step into it but it was rather difficult to step out of, when nature called.

I fondly remember Chanukkah (Festival of Lights). Father lit one candle and then an extra candle for eight nights and left the menorah standing near the window. I would fall asleep as the little flames gradually died away. We had a menorah made of brass belonging to my paternal grandparents. It now belongs to me. I had it silver plated and use it every Chanukkah. I hope someone in my family will use it after me.

When I think back to the Passover, I recall on the morning before the first night, my father would go to all the cupboards with a lit candle to check that all drawers and cupboards, the larder and the closets, were free of *chometz* – leavened foodstuff. Mother, with the help of our maid, would have cleaned the house thoroughly over the previous weeks, a spring clean that was part of the ritual, but also welcome after the long winter.

I was given the task of arranging the Seder plate. I grated the horseradish and made the *charoseth* by grating the apples and adding walnuts, cinnamon and wine. Mother helped me to grill the bone and egg and I washed the parsley for the bitter herbs. I recall the matzos came in a huge cylindrical roll, almost as tall as I was and they were round. At the seder, Father always explained the order of the Passover so that Hans and I could follow it. We always

had guests, a grandmother and two of Father's sisters and their families.

The Seder would last four hours. After the first glass of wine, Hans and I would be feeling a little tipsy and silly, and would slide under the table to tickle the grown-ups or just have fun. I recall taking matzos to school for my lunch and often sharing them with my non-Jewish classmates. We would get a new pair of socks or a blouse for Passover, but outfitting oneself from top to toe was not a German custom.

I remember some Christian observances that we two little Jewish children partook in without our own beliefs being challenged. The Catholic calendar was marked by various holy days at which time there were processions in the streets. Holy statues would be carried aloft festooned with flowers. A boy would swing an incense-burner in front and the priest and the choirboys would follow, dressed in gorgeous robes. Our maids took us to see these processions and we found them very exciting.

The Feast of St. Nicolas was in November. Our maid's friend dressed up as St. Nicolas (a kind of Father Christmas). We children were frightened of this strange person, but when we got lollies from her we were happy. I remember being invited to our neighbour's apartment to see the Christmas tree, because they felt sorry that we were missing out. We were full of admiration for the decorations, the presents, the silver floss that sparkled and the beautiful angel on top. We didn't feel deprived because we received Chanukkah presents. Mother would bring home a live carp from the fish shop. She would let it swim in our bath all week, then it was killed and cooked with ginger sauce for 24 December, Christmas Eve. Even the most orthodox Jewish families followed this custom.

SCHOOL DAYS

I went to state school at the age of six. I recall that on my first day at school my parents gave me a large cardboard cone filled with lollies and chocolates to sweeten the beginning of my education. Each cone had a picture on the front and every child had one. Mine was huge. I enjoyed learning and the comradeship of the girls in my class. My girlfriends were Jewish, Catholic and Protestant. We had a *kranzchen*, which literally means a wreath - a group of four girls that I was friendly with, Ruth Hofstein, Ulla Wangard, Vera Fiskal and Brigitte Ulitz. We went on walks together or met in one of our homes for coffee and cake. The coffee was actually warmed milk with a little coffee added for flavour. We sometimes spurred each other on to mischief.

For instance, at Ruth's place, there was a window on a landing half way to the ground floor, away from her parents' eyes. Her father, Dr Hofstein, had a busy medical clinic on the first floor and her mother was the nurse. We would attach a purse to a thin piece of sewing thread and position it on the street below. When a passer-by bent to pick it up, we would jerk it away, much to the person's embarrassment. Then, well hidden from view, we would hug each other with silent hilarity. Sometimes we would gather grass in the park and try to smoke it in silly-looking "cigarettes" we put together. They didn't even make us sick, but they didn't thrill us either, so after a few furtive attempts, we stopped.

I was a good average student, doing reasonably well in all subjects, but with a flair for art. I was always sketching and drawing. My parents encouraged me without putting much value on its worth. My mother arranged piano lessons for me and violin lessons for Hans as befitted well educated children from a middle-class background. Although we both loved music, we had neither the talent nor the inclination to play, and we continued for only a couple of years. I also had private lessons from a young woman, from the age of five, in French conversation. I don't remember her, but recall all the games we played and the songs she taught me, an advanced approach for those times.

My father was very fond of me and enjoyed opening my mind to the world around me, but he didn't burden me with high expectations in regard to scholastic results. My mother on the other hand, accepted Hans' shortcomings but never mine. She was a perfectionist and wanted me to follow in her footsteps. I tended to slump so I was quickly sent for remedial exercises. I was nagged about school work and piano practice, which I hated. I was always reluctant to sit alone in the large unheated sitting room, although, once, I had a little fieldmouse for company.

I might have envied Hans getting away with a lot more than me, but he was always in trouble with my father. He was born with a great sense of humour and was always clowning around, pulling silly faces and trying to make us laugh. He seemed to take pleasure in provoking Father, even though he adored him and emulated him. I remember him coming home, at about eight years of age, with a rhyming couplet about a balding schoolmaster. It was very funny, but Father was sensitive about his baldness and lost his temper, something which seldom

happened. He chased Hans around the apartment with a ruler. I tried to shield him but the chase continued till mother's favourite urn was toppled and smashed to pieces.

Sometimes Father would take us to the pictures. The first motion picture I saw with Father was called "Bee Maya". This was the first moving picture in 1926, in Germany. There were others, but I was not allowed to see grown-up films. The Germans were very strict. They allowed girls to marry at sixteen years of age but not see a film for mature audiences until they were eighteen.

HOLIDAYS

Because Father was a schoolmaster, he got the same holidays as the students. We would have liked to go away together as a family, but a schoolmaster's salary allowed us to do that only occasionally. What he did do was to take either Hans or me on three-day outings to the mountains. We would go hiking and absorb the beauty and the tranquillity, the views, the mountain streams and the fresh air. Mountain climbing was a national pastime in Germany and there was a youth organisation called the *Wandervoegel* (the wandering birds) devoted to it. Father bought me a *bergstock* – a special stick that facilitates climbing. It was the fashion to buy little metal tags, souvenirs with pictures of all the places one visited, and nail them to the stick. Soon I had quite a few to show off. I lived for those outings.

Nearly every holiday, we children were invited to spend a few days in Gross Strehlitz with our favourite cousins, Fredi and Annelies Nothman. We would travel there by train and it took one hour or more. Gross Strehlitz was a small town, where my Uncle Albert and Aunt Wanda had a big produce store together with Uncle Fritz, twin brother of Uncle Albert. I remember the peasants bringing their produce to the store. They would arrive on horse and wagon and unload the heavy hessian sacks of wheat, corn, rye and beet sugar on their backs or on to wheelbarrows.

I recall walking in the city park at night during summer with

Uncle or Auntie or their children's nurse and observing the glow worms in the trees. They gave forth so much light that they lit up our path. I still can bring to mind images of us children playing all kinds of games with our cousins. Of course, the secret games of "Mothers and Fathers" and "Doctors and Nurses" were two of them. Next door to the Nothman's produce business our Aunt Mimi and Uncle Perl had a hardware store. Aunt Mimi reigned supreme. She was a good manager and businesswoman. Her husband had other talents. He was good looking and a womaniser. A few doors further along was Uncle Willie's wholesale distillery and wine shop. His wife Mehta was beautiful, and I found out at that enlightening family reunion in San Fransisco that she and Uncle Perl had had a "friendship" over the years. Our parents would have never discussed such things in front of the children, or perhaps, if they ever did, it would have been in French or English.

In the summer of 1928, we went on vacation to Warnemünde, a resort on the Baltic Sea. It was the last holiday we took as a family. After that, we could no longer afford it, and anyway, after Hitler came to power, Jews stayed in the relative safety of their homes. I had been sick with flu and a throat infection, so a visit to Warnemünde was the ideal choice. My parents planned to take us on to Copenhagen on the Fairship Schwerin, where a train went on to the ship.

We rented rooms in the holiday home that belonged to the famous American pilot Charles Lindbergh, but we were the only ones staying there. I recall having a wonderful time. When the sun shone we went to the beach and when it was overcast we stayed at home playing with a huge collection of farm animals in miniature that belonged to the Lindbergh children. His eldest son

was kidnapped and murdered in 1932

I was given mud baths to strengthen me and recall that we explored all the lovely eating places, by studying the menus that were displayed outside. I think by August 1928 Wall Street in New York had collapsed. The value of the US dollar dropped from one day to the next. My parents had to give up the idea of taking us to Denmark and Copenhagen as the German mark had no value, so we decided to get home, as life was too uncertain. This was the last holiday with my parents, which was unforgettable, as we were all together.

As inflation started to climb higher and higher, my parents' economic position became more precarious. The wages were low, given that he was a senior schoolmaster and examiner. He added the training of teachers of mathematics and the teaching of flight physics to his already heavy load. The principle of teaching students gliding was one of his special subjects. Glider planes were just coming on to the scene. I have a very clear memory of two lots of fifteen students on each side of a hill, dragging their glider up with ropes and then running down and taking off with the down draught, the beginning of gliding, but they called it "flight physics". I recall some of his students. One was the son of the mayor of our town, whom my father tutored privately in mathematics. Father was given a beautiful crystal dish since he refused payment. It is in my possession, and every time I use it, it brings to mind my father and how it came into our home.

TWO STORIES ABOUT OUR MAID LENCHEN

Our kitchen was a warm and cosy place. There was always someone to talk to or something happening there. Mother was usually to be found in the kitchen, engaged in her many chores, or giving instruction to our maid, Lenchen (Helena) who was a beautiful country girl. We were all fond of her. Mother trained her to cook, keep house and clean.

I recall one cold winter evening. It was about dinner time and Hans and I were having a great time standing near the wood stove cracking walnuts. This stove was always in use. We used it as a giant toaster, putting slices of rye bread on the very hot metal surface. I recall our maid blackening this surface with a special brush and polish which kept it shiny. I think Hans and I were so engrossed in cracking our walnuts that when Mother called us into the dining room for the evening meal, we chose not to hear her.

All of a sudden, Lenchen came towards me, carrying a large steaming pot. She expected me to be sitting at the dining room table, not near the stove. She bumped into me, spilling the boiling water with the frankfurts all over me and my blue patterned velvet frock. I was in agony. I grabbed a towel to wipe my neck and found my skin coming off in my hand. I ran into the dining room and my father immediately called the doctor. I had suffered third degree burns and I recall having a high temperature.

I was put into a plaster bandage and had to be in bed for five or six weeks. I was fortunate that the burns on my neck and shoulder did not leave any scars. It was thought that I was lucky to have had that thick velvet frock on. It probably saved my life, since the velvet had absorbed some of the heat. It was also lucky that it was easy to remove. It was fastened with a zip fastener, just new in Germany.

I must have been in great pain. But I recall using my time in bed with paper cutouts using black paper and fine small scissors. I drew a lot as well. I think this experience taught me that adversity can be turned into something of benefit spiritually as well as artistically. Throughout my life I have refused to let bad events or health problems cloud my optimism or enthusiasm for living life fully.

Lenchen was not blamed for this accident. I was, because I was where I should not have been. But a later incident brought about her dismissal. I was about ten years of age. My parents had gone out leaving Hans and me to be looked after by Lenchen. I woke up and called out to her, but when there was no answer I left my bed to look for her. She was nowhere to be seen. I thought that maybe she had gone downstairs to visit our neighbours' maid on the first floor, as they were good friends. As I walked out of our front door, it slammed shut, leaving me standing on the stairs in my nightgown. It was dark and freezing cold, since it was winter. Hans was a deep sleeper, so my knocking brought no response.

I continued downstairs to the neighbours and asked if Lenchen was there. They immediately understood the situation and invited me to come in out of the cold. When Lenchen returned, not much later, she found my bed empty and came

looking for me. She tucked me back into bed and begged me not to tell my mother on her. As one might expect, a few weeks later, the neighbour met Mother on the staircase and said to her, "I felt so sorry for your little Marianne, locked out in her nightie!" When Mother heard this she asked Lenchen for an explanation. Lenchen burst into tears and said she wanted to check on her boyfriend and had left us alone for just a few minutes. Mother felt she couldn't trust her any more and she was dismissed. I was sad to see her go, because I was very fond of her. I heard later on that she had married her boyfriend who was Jewish and left with him to live in South America. They were lucky to leave before his religion would have destroyed both their lives.

OUR WANDERING BEGINS

All these wonderful times stopped when Hitler came to power in Germany, as Hindenburg, the old Chancellor was too weak. The National Socialists had won the election by luck or manipulation or both. After 1 April 1933, life changed rapidly for us. In fact, our first encounter with the "New Order" came immediately. Dr. Schlesinger's surgery was visible from our balcony, and on 1 April we had a good view of non-Jewish patients being turned away by two SA (Sturmabteilung) men in uniform. They were not allowed to visit their doctor any longer as he was a Jew. This scenario, being played out all over Germany, was a chilling indication of how much care and effort the government was willing to put into turning its Jewish citizens into non-people. That day, as a thirteen-year-old, when I observed the humiliation of our neighbours, stands out in my mind as the beginning of the end. It was clear that nobody was willing or able to come to their aid, and the same would be true when our turn came. Germany itself was sliding into a war-footing. Father's salary along with everybody else's was cut to help with the re-arming of the Fatherland and food rationing came in with increasing stringency.

Every month, a new decree came out against Jewish people. In 1933, Father was removed from the position that he had held with distinction for seventeen years. Although he had been admired and respected by his students and colleagues alike, a Jew could no longer hold such a senior teaching position, let

alone remain an examiner. He was transferred, in August 1933, to Patschkau near the Sudeten Mountains, a much smaller township with nine thousand inhabitants and five Jewish families.

It was hard leaving our family and friends behind. In his new position, Father was teaching mathematics, physics and chemistry to boys destined to become priests. What an irony! They knew that he was Jewish and welcomed him warmly. Hitler's poison had not yet reached everywhere! It was not long before he became one of their favourite teachers. I went to the local convent school. Naturally, the girls were Catholic except for five Protestants and me, the only Jew. I deepened my love for art thanks to the nuns and derived much pleasure from the crafts they taught us — embroidery, petit point and drawn-thread work, to name a few. They were patient and kind, knowledgeable and dedicated.

I made friends with my classmates and was invited to visit one girl whose parents owned a farm. I recall they responded to my religion by not giving me pork. I loved my stay with them. For a while our family felt safe, and even hopeful. It seemed to my parents that the general population had not taken to Nazism.

A happy memory of that time was Hans' barmitzvah in January 1935. Because there was no synagogue or family in Patschkau, we travelled back to Oppeln for the celebration. It was held in our beloved synagogue with our uncle Rabbi Braunchweiger officiating. I had learnt the Parsha off by heart while listening to Hans practising, and remember nervously saying it in my head with him all the way, but he acquitted himself really well. After the service, there was a party arranged at the Community House by my mother. She had planned it to perfection – the white cloths, wonderful food, music and

speeches. It was lovely being back, even briefly, with family and friends.

Back in Patschkau a particularly memorable event took place just prior to Christmas 1934. Our family received an invitation to join the Brothers from the seminary for dinner. On arrival at the monastery, we watched a performance of the Christmas pageant and then had a beautiful dinner in the company of the monks. It was a festive occasion. Everything was spotless and for some reason, I particularly recall the gleaming aluminium saucepans. The experience had great significance to us at the time and is one I have never forgotten. I am sure that it was their way of letting us know that they did not subscribe to Nazi policy.

Our respite was short-lived. In January 1936, after two and a half years in Patschkau, my father was transferred to a position in the State University Library of Breslau, where he catalogued books. He had one more year to retirement, but a Jew could no longer teach members of the "Master Race". In Breslau, Hans and I transferred to a Jewish coeducational college, a Reform *Realgymnasium*. It was a good school and I enjoyed my year there. This was not the end of my father's demotion. On 1 September 1936 he was pensioned off, in accordance with a new law that stated that Jews could no longer be employed in the state system. His pension was not enough to live on and it was important for him to find employment elsewhere.

My parents never quarrelled with one exception. Mother wanted to leave Germany, but father could not bear the thought of becoming a refugee. There was talk of a possible position in Argentina as a mathematics teacher but he did not take it further, as he felt he couldn't teach mathematics in Spanish. He believed that a civilised country like Germany would reject Hitler before

long and that sanity would return. Meanwhile we would survive as best we could and prevail. He sought work in the only field still open to him, the Jewish private school system. He soon found an excellent position. It was as assistant headmaster and head of the Science Department in a Jewish coeducational college in Berlin.

BERLIN

Again, for a while, our life fell into a manageable pattern. Mother was largely responsible. Every time we moved she set about recreating the calm atmosphere of our original home. Father's salary was quite generous and we were able to rent a pleasant apartment. I would like to describe it in some detail. Every corner is etched in my memory, because it was the last home I was to share with my beloved family. It was a second floor apartment in Richard Wagner Strasse opposite the stage entrance of the German Opera House in Charlottenburg. It was spacious and airy with three bedrooms. The windows of the apartment were double - paned to keep the icy cold out in winter and there was also a central heating system. Naturally, Hans and I continued our education at our father's new school. The standard was high. My subjects were English, French, Latin and Hebrew, as well as Mathematics, Physics, Chemistry, Art, Music, Geography and Biology.

My favourite room in the apartment was my father's study. One whole wall was lined with bookshelves and it faced a balcony overlooking the Opera House. To the right of the balcony was my father's desk with three big drawers. Sometimes I would be the recipient of some of the fascinating things he kept there. Whenever Father tidied his desk, he would give me odds and ends like paper clips, rubber bands, pencils and rubbers, knowing how much I enjoyed receiving them.

Hans and I had a room each. My wardrobe had a large bookshelf and space for my coats and dresses. I treasured my books and was able to bring fifty of them to Australia. Hans' room was next to mine. It also had a large bookcase and I spent many hours there. His friends became my boyfriends and my girlfriends were his girlfriends. At sixteen and seventeen, we were no longer children.

It seems strange in retrospect, but even in 1937, in spite of the political situation, we were still able to find pleasure in aspects of our day to day existence; our friendships, infatuations and the reassuring daily rituals. For instance, among my fondest memories are visits with Mother to the delicatessen along Kant Strasse in Charlottenburg where I was given the task of choosing items for the evening meal – rollmops, fish in aspic or meat and vegetable salad with mayonnaise. Possibly, these details have stayed in my memory because of the chaos that was soon to follow. I am sure that my parents were a great deal more worried than we were.

Every month, new decrees came out to make our lives miserable and they affected every aspect of our life. For instance, when we employed a maid, it had to be an older woman. A law had been passed forbidding Jews to employ non-Jewish servants under forty-five so that no sexual relations, with the possible consequence of "racially impure" offspring, could take place. We were not allowed to go to the pictures or concerts, theatre or opera.

So the Jewish community conducted its own theatre, pictures and concerts. The committee that organised it was called the *Kulturbund*. There was so much talent available to draw on that the standard of any performance was consistently high. I recall

seeing an unforgettable "Midsummer Night's Dream". They organised film nights. But the building where they were shown was a ramshackle old place that had actually been condemned. I still feel panic when I remember how, after watching an American Molly Picon film, fire broke out. Hans and I felt our way out of the building, as smoke engulfed the auditorium. The doors were heavy wooden ones and very difficult to open, but we managed to escape unharmed. A few people lost their hats and coats, but thankfully, not their lives. To this day, whenever I am in a theatre or movie house, the first thing I do is to look for the exit signs.

It was about then when we started hearing our parents talking in hushed tones about unspeakable things. One of their acquaintances had been taken away and only the ashes were sent home. Some of my father's acquaintances were sent to Buchenwald or other camps. If they had the possibility to leave the country, they were sometimes freed. Others died of the harsh treatment they were given. We no longer trusted our neighbours, some of whom would no longer greet us, which was humiliating. Our relationships with non-Jews in the past had been friendly and open, in some cases very close. We were sure that our phone was tapped. There were many things that my parents talked about in whispers or in French or English, and as a result I only understood a small part of what was going on. One thing they did make clear. They warned us that the maid was not trustworthy and could report any conversation to the SA or police. So many bad things were happening and nobody could protect us. My art, the painting and sketching I did at school and home, came to mean more to me than ever. It became a means of escape. I had to escape, at least in my mind, in order to face

another day without succumbing to fear. Art seemed to replace fear, to replace insecurity. Art was beauty. Art kept my belief alive of a universal understanding between people, a language without religious barriers or racial discrimination - a language only of colour, shape, line, tone and texture. I had long dreamt of being accepted into the world-famous Reimann Schule, the art academy in Berlin. Of course it was closed to me, as to all Jewish students, no matter how talented. The anger and disappointment pushed me into an obsession to do everything possible to leave the country, whereas before I had been passively waiting for something or someone to save us.

A FATEFUL VISIT

Irma, my favourite cousin on my father's side, came to visit us in Berlin around August 1937 with her new husband Lothar. They were on their honeymoon. They only stayed with us for a few days but we were so pleased to have a chance to see them. They were leaving Germany to immigrate to Australia. Lothar had a cousin there who had sent a permit for them. Here I saw the opportunity to save my life and perhaps my family's as well.

I gave my photo to Irma with the following words: "Irma, please take this photo, my best one, and see if someone wants to fill in the formalities for a permit for me. I don't care how hard I will have to work as long as I can leave Germany and help my parents." Irma promised to do what she could and I was sure that she would do her best. We were good friends, and she had a debt of gratitude to my father, who had looked after her widowed mother financially for years. Without that visit and Irma's help, I probably would not have survived the Holocaust.



My mother Margarette Goldhammer,
aged 23, Berlin 1906.



My parents, Oppeln 1919.



My father, Eugen Freund, as a young man, Koenigshvette circa 1917.



Myself and my brother Hans, Oppeln 1921.



Myself and Hans in our back garden,
Oppeln 1924.



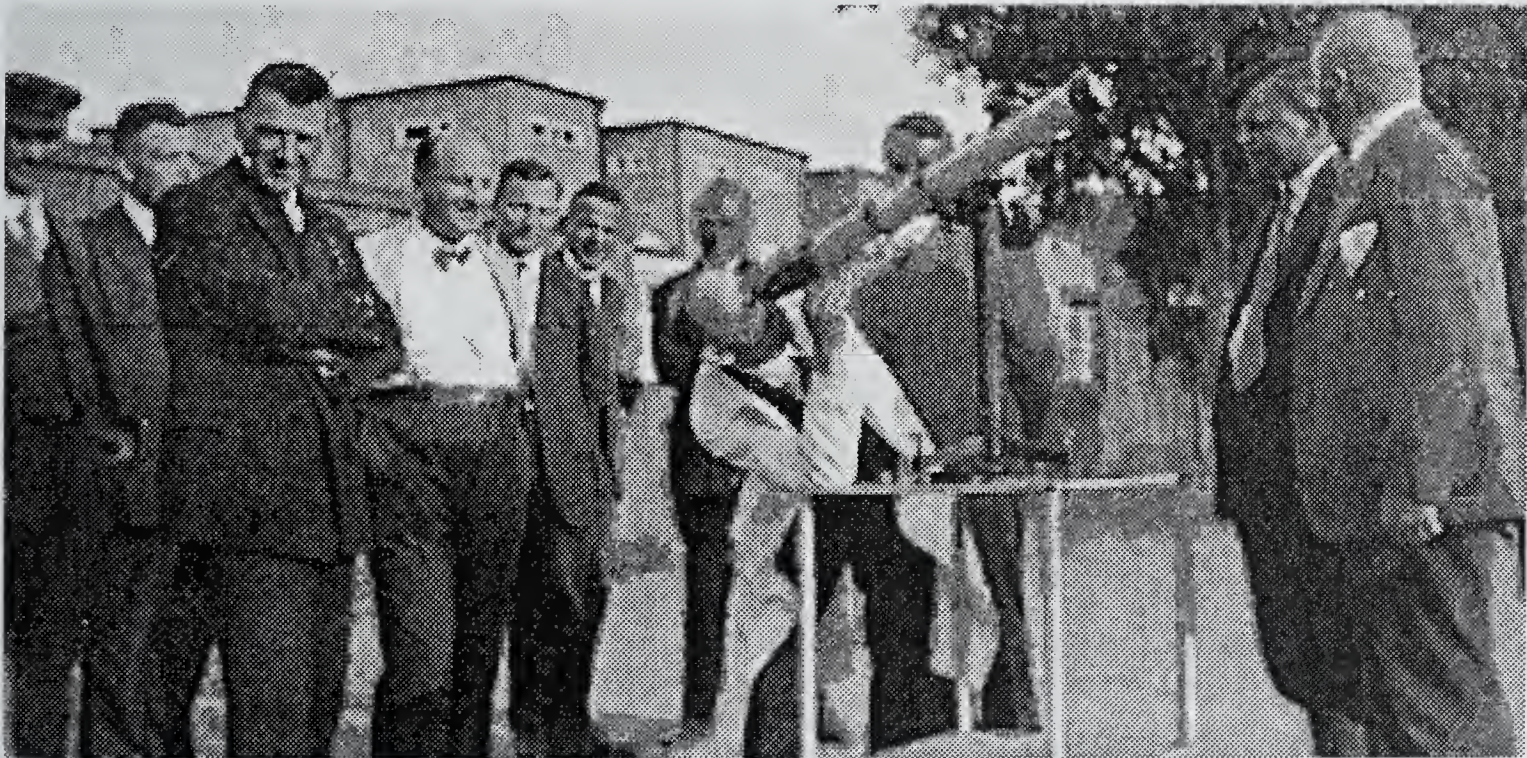
Entrance to our apartment in Oppeln.



My drawing of the Oppeln Synagogue.



The “Kränzchen” in the Bolko Park. I am second from the right. 1933.



Father demonstrating telescope with his student teachers, Oppeln 1930.



Myself as a young girl,
Patschkau 1934.



Photo that saved my life – sent to
Australia with Irma, 1938.



Still life of father's desk, taken the day before
he died, December 18, 1938. Calendar page
remained fixed on "17".



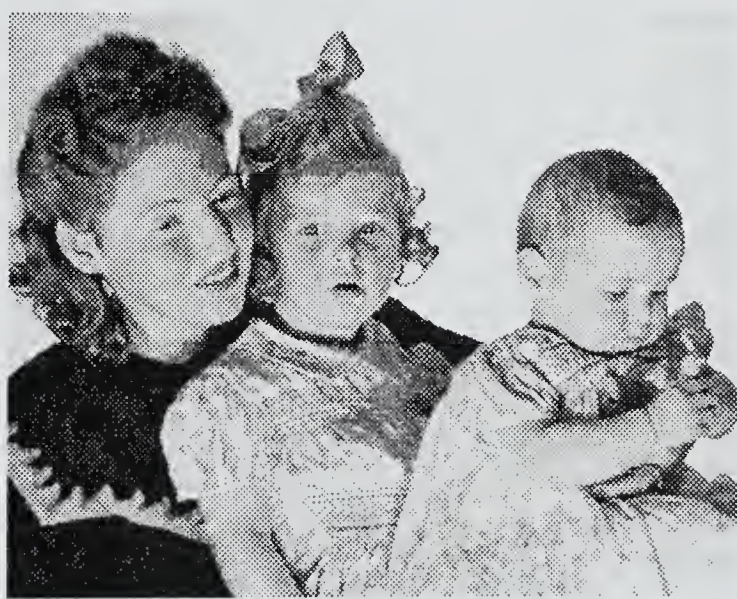
Last photo of my mother,
Berlin 1938.



My wedding. Left to right: Bernie Kornhauser, Aku, myself, Gwendolyn and Herta. March 3, 1942.



Aku and myself, Hepburn Springs, circa 1950.



Myself with Evelyn and Vivienne, circa 1946.



Myself circa 1950.



Myself with colleague at PLC, circa 1962.



Aku in tennis jumper, 1962.



Evelyn and Vivienne in the back garden, circa 1948.



Evelyn circa 1960



David, Evelyn in the centre and Rebecca on the right



Ruben and Vivienne, 2000.



Isaac (top), Noah and Dahlia.



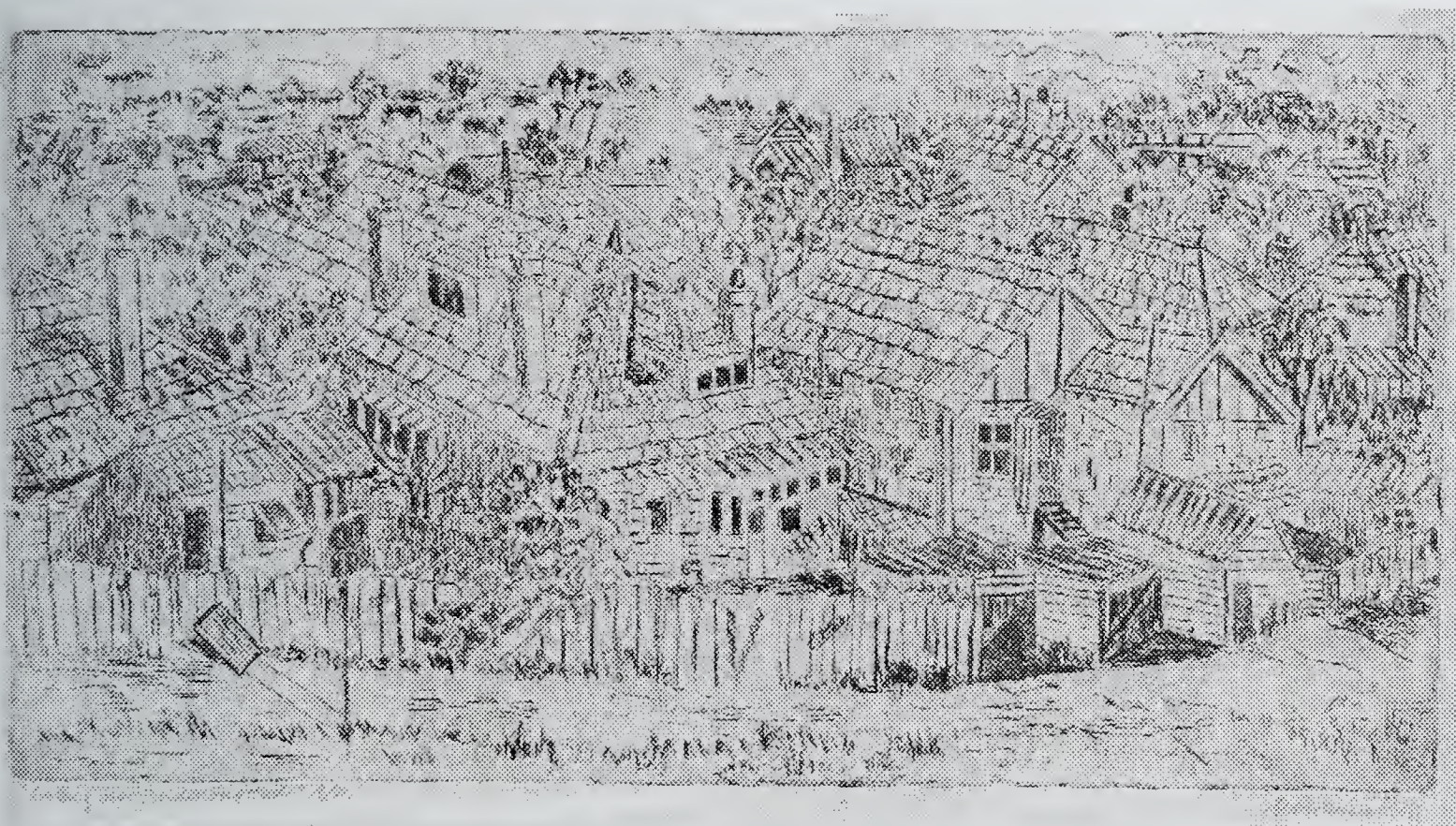
Myself in France, 1986.



With the Mayor of Caulfield
at my last big exhibition at the
Caulfield Arts Centre, 1986.



Vivienne, Hans, myself and Evelyn, 1998.



Sepia etching: Looking over Dandenong Road, circa 1974.



Sp. Looking towards Melbourne

Melbourne 1974

Etching: Looking towards Melbourne, circa 1974.



Oil pastel drawing: Room in Provence,
1985.



Oil pastel drawing: My bedroom,
Provence, 1985.



Collage: Greek harbour, 1985.



Collage: Melbourne Botanic Gardens, circa 1990.

KRYSTALLNACHT 1938

This date marked the death sentence for European Jewry. The German Reich, on that day, orchestrated an open display of violence and murder against its Jewish population, and when nobody in or out of Germany raised much of an objection, they knew that they had *carte blanche*. It led inevitably to the death of my father and my mother and most of my large extended family: old people, young people and children. A thriving, educated, industrious society was soon to disappear. Those few who managed to escape enriched their adopted countries as they once had Germany.

Hans and I were eyewitnesses to that dreadful day. I was studying for my matriculation, but on 9 November we were sent home from school at lunchtime, as a Nazi Party *aktion* against Jews was anticipated. My mother ordered Hans and me to stay at home. She couldn't have been all that worried, because she went off to the hairdresser. I sensed the gravity of the situation and said to Hans, "We have to see what is going on, so that we can tell our children and grandchildren." Against her wishes we slipped out of the house.

Neither of us looked Jewish so felt we were safe enough in the streets. We left our apartment and walked towards our synagogue in Fasanen Strasse, about half an hour away. There we witnessed a mob of people, in broad daylight, shouting and cheering as they watched our synagogue burn. The mob was ecstatic, calling out vicious things about the Jews and what they

would like to do to them. I believe the caretaker was burnt together with the synagogue, but whether he was trapped or had been locked in, I do not know. We were shocked and sickened. We made our way home, and saw Jewish shops being looted, windows smashed or painted with swastikas or Magen Davids. Jewish men were being beaten up. We later learnt that synagogues all over Berlin and the rest of Germany had been burnt to the ground.

The next day, the Nazis started rounding up Jewish men and they started with the professionals – doctors, lawyers and academics. Most of those who were arrested were sent to concentration camps – to Dachau, Buchenwald or Sachsenhausen. In the middle of the night the phone rang. It was a non-Jewish colleague of my father, a headmaster of a secondary school. He had been forced to join the Nazi party to keep his job and here he was risking his life by warning us that storm troopers were on the way. He told Father to take Hans and leave home at once. On 10 November my father and brother walked the streets all through the night. They felt safe nowhere. Mother had gone to Aunt Liese hoping that they would eventually end up there. In the morning they rang her and told her in a sort of code, in case the phone was tapped, that they would be staying with different friends and family who had mixed marriages and could harbour them for a day or two in relative safety.

Meanwhile, I was left in our flat in Charlottenburg. There had been no incidents where women or children had been taken away, and it was felt that I was quite safe at home with the maid, keeping an eye on things. But unknown to my parents, I had been enduring terror and harassment since the day they left. Every night at eleven o'clock and every morning at six, two huge Brownshirts came to the door. They'd ask for my father, and I'd

tell them that I didn't know where he was. They would search the flat, looking under beds and into wardrobes. Then they would ask me question after question about my family.

Each time they came, I would shake with fear, although I hid it as best I could. After they left, the only thing that calmed the shaking was to go into my father's study and begin sketching. It had become my habit, whenever I was distressed, to take a pencil in my hand and draw. I did so now, many sketches of my left hand in various positions. The hand is not easy to capture on paper, and the concentration helped the fear to subside and my courage to return a little.

One time, my Nazi visitors saw the Blue Box, and asked what it was. I was too afraid to lie, and I said that we put money in it for Palestine. One of them sneered, "Why don't you all go to Palestine?" If only we had! If only we could! We were like flies caught in a spider web. The men in brown asked again and again, each time more violently, "Where are your parents?" I replied as I had before, that I didn't know: they had gone out, but I didn't know where. My interrogators finally lost patience with me. One of them shouted, "You cheeky brat! You tell your father to stay at home, or we'll take you in his place!" I became very agitated. I had no way of knowing if they were just trying to scare me, or if they, in fact, had the power to arrest me.

Next time they came, not in the morning, but in the afternoon, which made me nervous. After we had gone through the whole charade again, they made me ring my aunt, to see if my parents were there. When she answered the phone I said, "Aunt Liese, I am so worried. Do you know where my parents are? I haven't seen them for days." She answered, "Don't worry. They are right here drinking coffee. They have been with me today. Hans too." The Brownshirts were only three feet away, and

watching me closely. "Auntie," I said, "Is there any way you can find them for me? I need to talk with them urgently. If you can, please let them know." I listened to her anxious voice without hearing what she was saying, thanked her and hung up. "She says she'll ring around and try to find them for me," I said. "Maybe tomorrow I will be able to tell you where they are."

The men left, and I felt that it would be impossible to face them again. I left the flat, informing the maid that I was going to look for my parents. The Underground was close to our home, and in a short time I was at my aunt's place. It was a relief to be reunited with my parents and Hans. When I told them what had been happening, they considered what to do next. Father had been in hiding for a week and he felt that he could not live like a criminal. He was a man of total integrity and that week as a fugitive had taken an enormous emotional and physical toll on him.

The next day, he went to the Charlottenburg Police Station and gave himself up. The police were civil to him and told him to take Hans and go home. They said that the *aktion* was the work of the SA and had nothing to do with them. Now that it was over, nothing bad would happen to him.

A few days later, he developed excruciating stomach pains. He was rushed to the Jewish hospital with peritonitis. The stomach ulcer that had not bothered him for years had burst. The grief of hiding like a hunted animal and his fear for our future had worn him down. He developed pneumonia and died a few days later. He was buried in the Berlin Jewish Cemetery, in Weisensee. I was so numb, I felt nothing. Six years ago, nearly sixty years later, I visited my father's grave. The pain that I could not express adequately when he died, I had to feel in all its devastating strength this time.

MY LAST MONTHS IN BERLIN

I received the permit for Australia in December 1938, a few weeks after Father's death. Irma had found an Australian Jewish woman who was willing to employ me at her market stall. Then Hans was put on the list for the Children's Transport and was to leave for London on 3 April, 1939. Two of my father's colleagues were in charge of the list, and they agreed that Hans should be included, even though he was already seventeen. The reason was that he was the only male left to carry the family name.

Those last months were the worst time I ever had. Most of our family and friends had left Germany. Some were able to say goodbye to us, others phoned or wrote. Mother had lost so many friends and then Father. Now she was to lose her two children.

One brave and bizarre incident stands out from the grey misery of those months. Only weeks after Father had died, we read that "La Bohème" was being performed at the Opera House. Grief had made us rebellious and we decided to risk going. We thought we could pass as "Aryan". We bought the cheapest tickets on the upper balcony, and listened to Gigli as Rudolfo. It was an unforgettable experience for more than one reason. Hitler was actually sitting in the dress circle. We were afraid that security would be particularly high and we would be found out. Luckily we were not, but what a chance we took! Was it worth risking our lives? In hindsight perhaps not! But I'm so glad we did. It was probably the last time Mother forgot her heartache for a little while.

Mother helped Hans with his emigration. From December till April, she sold most of our furniture and looked for a cheaper place to stay. She found two rooms in Wieland Strasse, close by, and we moved there after Hans left Berlin. I will never forget the day of our parting with Hans, when we accompanied him to the big railway station, the Anhalter Bahnhof. There were hundreds of mothers and fathers saying goodbye to their children, not knowing if they would ever see them again. It was a heartbreaking scene. There were children as young as four years old carrying tiny suitcases and clutching the hands of their mothers until the whistle started to blow. A last kiss and hug — for most, an eternal goodbye. It was heartbreaking for us too, although Hans promised that he would do everything in his power to get Mother to England.

Now it was my turn to get ready to depart. I knew that if I wanted to live, I had to do it on my own because Mother became almost paralysed with grief. I started going to various authorities and the shipping office. Mother's cousin, born Eva Richter, was married to a non-Jew, Otto Uhrland, who held a senior position in shipping. He was a wonderful person, always very kind, and it was to him that I now turned. He took on the task of getting me out of the country as soon as possible and he quickly helped me find a berth on the Dutch ship "Christian Huygens." How lucky I was to travel on a Dutch boat! We were afraid that if I was travelling on a German boat, and war broke out, we would be turned back. Hundreds of people were waiting for passage, but Otto helped us to pay in foreign currency, and that made the difference.

Mother suggested that I take half of what she possessed as my

dowry, and hopefully, she would bring the rest. Her cherished possessions filled six crates. If only I could have taken her instead! I can still see the packers in our home and their careful handling of Mother's favourite Meissen china, the crystal, my books, the Persian rugs, the eiderdowns and linen.

At 11 pm. on 21 May, at the Zoo Station, I said goodbye to my darling mother. I still see her in front of me, dressed in a black coat with a Persian lamb collar. She looked so beautiful, even at forty-five. She was so sad and it broke my heart. I was deserting her. I felt that this could be the last time I would see her unless a miracle happened and I could get a permit for her to join me. Australia allowed young people to enter if they could be maids or cooks, or toolmakers if they were young men. Mother would obviously have made a wonderful housekeeper, but she was considered too old.

I was travelling to Amsterdam to board the ship and was terrified when we stopped at the border. But the officials examined my passport and allowed me to cross the German border into Holland. That feeling I would like to share with you, dear reader. It was like having been freed from the straightjacket of Hitler's regime and finally to be able to breathe again.

I was met at Amsterdam railway station by Miss Zanders, an acquaintance of Mother who picked me up from the station and brought me to her home. She kindly looked after me for three days until I was ready to depart. The two things I remember about Amsterdam was the abundance of food in the shops, especially the fruit, and the fact that people weren't living behind closed curtains. Everywhere, you could actually look into people's windows and witness their daily lives. It stood in stark contrast to the world I had just escaped. On 24 May, the "Christian Huygens" sailed.

My cousin Herta, Irma's sister, was also aboard. We had planned to seek each other out, but by happy coincidence, we were allocated the same cabin. When we reached Southampton on 25 May, Hans was able to stay with me on the ship. He came by train from London and the purser, without charge, gave him a cabin for one night, so I was able to be with Hans until I departed. I showered him with chocolates and fruit. He was living in a children's home, and found such luxuries very welcome. Then we had to say goodbye.

Hans spent all the war years in England. He was interned, ironically, as an enemy alien, on the Isle of Man but soon was released to do war work. He studied optometry at night at the Polytechnic College and ground lenses for the war effort in the daytime. We were not to see each other again till 1949, when I brought him to Melbourne. He married a girl from Berlin, Marion Kroto, and has two lovely daughters and seven grandchildren. We are as close as ever.

ON BOARD

I travelled tourist class, and the cabin was below deck. There were many Jewish refugees from Germany and Austria and gradually we got to know one another. One couple who were distant relatives of both Father and Mother were among the passengers. They were travelling First Class with their three children. When Mother found out that we would be sailing together, she contacted them to ask if they would look after me. At almost nineteen, I no longer considered myself a child and preferred to look after myself.

I had left behind so much fear and sorrow and was travelling to an unknown future, so I was determined to enjoy every moment of the journey. I loved walking around the ship, exploring the various reception rooms. There was a swimming pool and deck games for me to join in with. My schoolgirl English, added to my German, allowed me to converse with almost everybody on board.

I went to a fancy dress party as a Japanese lady, having been able to borrow a kimono. I loved the Dutch food and ate very good meals and even put on weight. We stopped in Monte Carlo and were allowed to go ashore. I saw the casino, but had no wish to gamble, having so little money, only twenty English pounds to begin a new life, and not to be touched. I made friends with my own age group and even met a charming young Englishman named Albert who worked for the Shell Oil Company in Borneo.

We had a little flirtation, a very innocent one, which lasted till I had to change ships in Colombo.

Colombo was exotic, tropical and exciting. Herta and I stayed at the YWCA for three days until the English ship "Mooltan" arrived. A group of us were taken around by members of the local Jewish community. We were shown Colombo and the beautiful fishing village of Negambo. The time passed pleasantly till it was time to continue our journey to Australia. The "Mooltan" was old and very run down and the food was almost inedible. I was glad when I arrived in Melbourne on 4 July, 1939.

AUSTRALIA

It was a cold, wintry day. Irma and Lothar were at the wharf to meet us, as well as people from the Jewish Welfare Society. I had to show the immigration authorities fifty pounds "landing money" to prove that I wouldn't be a burden on the Commonwealth. Of course I did not possess such an amount. It was handed to me by the Jewish Welfare people, then immediately returned to them for the next immigrant. This ploy saved many lives and I never heard of one Jewish person ending up unsupported by their family or their community. I entered on a "Household" permit, which meant I was only allowed to be a domestic servant.

My cousins had a small haberdashery shop at St. Kilda Junction and lived behind the shop in a small flat. There was no spare bed for me, so I slept between Irma, who was pregnant, and her husband. Herta occupied the couch. I stayed with them for three days. I remember spending most of my time cleaning the kitchen and the rest of the flat and helping with the cooking. It brought home to me that there would be no maids in Australia!

I then moved to the home of the Foley family, who had signed my permit. They were hard-working Australian Jews who had a fruit and vegetable stall at the Camberwell Market. I was given their best room to sleep in and my bed was the couch. My job was to help them serve at the market. Mr Foley drove the fruit truck and Mrs Foley would take me to and from the market in a rickety old car. The door on my side kept opening at odd times

and I was afraid of falling out. I recall in the first month tearing all my silk stockings and ruining my frocks, as I stood behind wooden boxes and fruit crates with nails sticking out of them.

Those first four weeks were very hard for me. Especially hard were Friday nights. I kept remembering the Shabbos in my parents' home in Berlin, when we would gather round the table with its white damask cloth and flickering candles in their silver candlesticks. In my imagination, I would see my father reciting the benedictions over the bread and wine and smell the wonderful meal my mother had prepared. Now I was standing till 9 p.m. serving customers for twelve hours at a stretch. No hot dinner! If I was lucky, I managed to eat a sandwich. I remember helping myself to a nice red apple and I don't think the Foleys liked me eating it. I think they expected me to eat a half-rotten or soft apple. I stayed with them about six weeks. They were so poor, they could afford to pay me only a little pocket money, and then nothing at all. They understood when I wanted to leave. I was willing, but not very good at the job, and my main value to them was that many people came to the stall to see and speak to "the Little German Girl." I was a novelty as long as I was there.

So I looked around for a job as a nanny and housekeeper and found a good one in the home of Ben Rosenbaum, who came from Shepparton. His parents were orchardists and still were living there. The household consisted of Bella and Ben Rosenbaum and Maurice, their dear little four-year-old son. My English was limited and my knowledge of cleaning and cooking was no better. But Bella was a wonderful teacher. I learnt so much about cooking and housekeeping from her. She was to become my lifelong friend. In Australia, I realised how little had been required of me as I was growing up. Mother was such a

good manager and there was always a servant. She had thought of me as hopelessly undomesticated and it is true that I had shown no great interest in household matters. Mother was such a perfectionist and I could never come up to her exacting standards. But now when I had to, I was my mother's daughter and learnt fast.

I looked after Maurice. I bathed and fed him and babysat him at night when his parents went out. I shall never forget how nervous I was. I continuously checked the little boy while he slept, just making sure he was all right. I took him for walks, even to the Prahran Police Station where I was fingerprinted, as I was considered an enemy alien. The little money I spent was on shoe repairs and stamps. My aim was to put enough money aside to help my poor mother buy a passage out of Germany. I applied to Canberra and offered to sponsor her but the application was refused. I wrote to my relatives in the US to send Mother an affidavit, but like me, they were also new immigrants, with no possibility of helping.

In the street where the Rosenbaums lived there was a family Alexander who had travelled to Australia from Southampton on the same ship as me. They were in First Class and I had travelled Tourist Class, but we were acquainted with each other. One day, I met Mrs. Alexander, who told me that she had some gifts for me from Albert, the young man from my shipboard romance. Albert had entrusted these gifts to the family Alexander to give to me. I promised I would pick them up.

So one evening, I went over and they introduced me to a man, formerly from Leipzig, whose parents they had known through business. His name was Noah Roth, a nice looking man, about eighteen years older than me. He was known by the name

of "Aku" a rendition of his name by his twin brother when they were small. Aku's original name was Rotzaig, but as nobody seemed to be able to pronounce it, he changed it by deed poll to Roth.

I told Aku that I was looking for some way of improving my chances of earning a decent living. I had my matriculation but no training in any profession. I said I was considering nursing. His answer was, "My dear Marianne, forget about becoming a nurse. They get dreadful food in the hospitals and work very hard. As you need a roof over your head and want to save money to send to your mother, I suggest you work as a cook or nanny. You can't study. You need to live somewhere, as you have no parents to support you. Just forget about it."

My first impression was that I did not like him, as he made my future look bleak and hopeless. Nevertheless, I let him escort me home and he promised to ring me if he heard of any jobs. One day, I got a phone call. Aku had heard of a household job. I thanked him but told him, "I have a good job at the Rosenbaums and am happy." He asked me out with his friends. We would see one another once or twice a week, but our friendship remained platonic for a long time. I liked him, but I thought he was too old for me. We kept company for three years.

WAR

It was 1 September 1939 when Germany declared war on Poland. England came into the war and Australia followed. I recall travelling on the tram along Dandenong Road, to go to Wanda Road where I lived. I was desolate. Now I had no hope of bringing my mother to Australia. The borders were closed. I almost wanted to end my life. I recall jumping off the moving tram and falling heavily. I hurt myself, but obviously didn't break any bones, for I somehow managed to get home. I think this was the bleakest moment of my life as I realised the hopelessness of ever seeing my mother again. I recall crying myself to sleep often. I felt lonely and friendless, guilty and very depressed. I questioned myself if I could have tried harder, although I knew in my heart that it had not been possible. I had tried so hard in the two months I had been in Australia.

Then, for a while, I blamed my American relatives. I felt let down by them, especially as I could still hear the words of a cousin, a medical doctor, who said to my mother after Father passed away, "We shall help you Gretl, we promise." I thought bitterly that promises are so easy to make, yet he did not honour them. Then I thought, perhaps he had tried, but like me, found all doors barred.

A few months later, I even gave up my job with the Rosenbaums whom I loved, to take a job as a cook, for better pay. I still had one hope left, that I could help mother by saving

money, so she could perhaps emigrate to China. In retrospect, did I really think Mother would travel alone to Shanghai? Both my parents had been told one could go without a permit to Shanghai just by buying a passage on a boat to China. They had many arguments, because Father did not want to go. He was a sick man. Perhaps he did not have the money for four tickets or he was worrying whether he could support a family in a strange land. He only knew how to teach science. But Mother was a very good cook and housekeeper and Hans and I would have worked.

All these desperate thoughts and actions came to nothing. I heard later from witnesses, that twice when notice was given to gather for transportation, Mother chose to ignore them, and took an overdose of sleeping tablets instead. Twice she was rescued by well-meaning neighbours and revived. Thus she had to face a far worse death. Cecilie Margarethe Freund, aged forty-nine, was taken from 31 Wieland Strasse on 14 April 1942, first to the Warsaw Ghetto, and then to the gas chambers of Trawnicki Concentration Camp soon after. My mother has no grave that I can visit. It is a matter of continuing anguish for me that she was left to fend for herself and that we could not save her. I only hope and pray that the thought that her children were safe, was a consolation to her.

A handful of my relatives survived; amazingly, two in Berlin itself. Uncle Albert and Uncle Fritz, the twins, were in hiding when a former neighbour from Gross Strehlitz recognised them and denounced them. They were taken to Auschwitz where Dr Mengele did the most cruel experiments on them both. But they survived. Uncle Albert's wife Wanda dyed her hair blonde and worked, undetected, as a maid all through the war.

Their daughter Annelies, my favourite cousin, had an amazing escape. She had false papers and worked first as companion to an elderly lady, and later in an office. One day, she foolishly brought her photo album to work to show a particular photograph to a "friend". The girl somehow got suspicious and denounced her as Jewish. She was taken to the police station in Berlin, where she kept denying the claims. They put her in prison awaiting further investigation. It was 1944.

One day, the prisoners were asked if there was a typist among them and she put up her hand. From then on she made herself useful by doing the typing. One of her fellow inmates told her that in the wall of the exercise yard, there were a few loose bricks. She waited for an opportune moment and removed the bricks and crawled out. She saw a tram passing, but developed a terrible cramp. The conductor actually waited for her and she was free. I understand that Otto Uhrland gave help and shelter to both Annelies and Aunt Wanda throughout the war when it was possible. He was a great human being. Annelies married a Jewish American officer after the war and the whole family moved to the US.

My darling Uncle Max went to Shanghai with his wife Grete and daughter Helga and her husband. He died there of typhus. His family migrated to Israel after the war. The fate of my family is typical of so many European Jewish families. Most lost their lives in the Holocaust. We few survivors reached many shores, and keep in touch and see each other as best we can.

MARRIAGE

I found employment as a cook with an Australian family in South Yarra. I had to wear a uniform, a black dress with a white starched apron, similar to the one our maid had worn when my parents had guests. I improved my knowledge of cooking but the man of the household could not stop untying my apron, until I got so angry that I told him, "Stop pawing me!", and then my situation improved. On my day off I learnt cooking, diet cooking, dressmaking and pattern making at the Emily McPherson College. These studies were paid for by the Jewish Welfare Society. Miss Barkman, who was in charge there, took a liking to me and insisted that I should be armed with qualifications. I was very grateful to her.

On that day off, I managed also to see my friend Aku. He was working at first with a partner and later on, on his own in a fur wholesale business. He had been a talented soccer player in Leipzig and had played internationally against Austria and England. Soccer was actually one of the reasons he came to Australia. One day a German fellow-player had called him a dirty Jew during a match. So Aku made sure that while playing, he managed to "accidentally" kick him hard in the ankle, thus disabling him. There were sure to be serious repercussions, so his parents sent him with his Uncle Sam and Auntie Johanna to Australia. When I met him, soccer was still his life. He was one of the founders of Hakoah, and was captain and centre-half of the

soccer team for years. A lot of his spare time and money went into the club. I used to go and watch him play till the children were born and learned to appreciate how skilled and graceful he was.

For three years Aku kept asking me to marry him, but I simply wasn't ready. I loved him but was aware that the age difference could be a problem. I prolonged the decision until 1941 and then we got engaged. That night, on the 7 December, Pearl Harbour was attacked. The next night was our little engagement party at the home of Aku's aunt and uncle. They had two children, a boy by the name of Benno, and a girl called Gwendolyn. Aku's Uncle Sam was a difficult man, much older than his non-Jewish wife, but she was a dear who was loved by everybody. She helped many of the new immigrants from Germany who arrived in '38 and '39, with motherly advice and constant practical help.

In March 1942, we were married at the St. Kilda Synagogue, with Rabbi Danglow officiating and Reverend Kowadlo as Cantor. I wore a beautiful lace frock that I bought at great expense at a bridal salon in the city. As I was an enemy alien, I was not given permission to visit Ilse Dreyfus, an excellent and reasonable dressmaker in Malvern. Malvern was beyond the boundary of the small area I could travel within, but the city was permitted. I had to fast on the day of the wedding and Irma immersed me in the bath and said a prayer over me. This was to replace the ritual bath, the *Mikvah*. I think there was a real one at the City Baths, but since I had nobody to come with me, that had to do.

Irma and Lothar had moved from the rooms behind their shop to upstairs, where there was a roomier flat comprised of the space over two shops, their own and the one next door. It was a fish and chip shop and the smells would sometimes waft their way. Now it is a massage parlour. This is where we had our wedding

breakfast. It was a very festive, though intimate affair, with only twenty people. "As it is wartime, a small wedding is more appropriate," Irma said, and she was right. Rabbi Danglow was the Master of Ceremonies. Although originally from Germany, he had become more British than the British. In his wedding speech, he called Aku "a white man". I suppose it was meant as a compliment. Irma had prepared a lovely meal. She was an excellent cook.

I recall having to report to the St. Kilda Police Station straight after the wedding. It was for the last time, since I was now married to an Australian citizen and no longer considered a potential spy. We were on our way to Scotts Hotel in the city where we were going to spend the night, and I was still in my wedding dress. How the police cheered us and laughed. Some were soccer fans and knew Aku well. How different they were from our formal and stern German constabulary! Then we drove to Warburton for a brief honeymoon, as Aku was about to be called up a week later. As it happened, he was rejected on account of a football injury.

We started our married life in a small rented one bedroom flat in South Yarra, in Darling Street. In 1943, on the 3 August, Evelyn was born. She was a strong, beautiful baby with blond hair and blue eyes. She was feeding well and sleeping in our sitting room or on the balcony in the daytime. Aku was making a good living selling furs, but in 1940 the government sealed all his furs and he could only make a living selling skins of Australian animals. We lived very simply. Our Evelyn was our great joy. She was very lively, and one day she fell out of her cot when a neighbour was minding her. We realised we could not stay in a flat, as Evelyn's cot was on the balcony when she fell out of it.

HUGHESDALE

We were lucky to rent a house in Hughesdale. Building had ceased during the war and there was very little to be had on the market. Later on, we were offered a chance to buy it, which we did with the help of a building society. We had a tennis court and a big front and back garden with a slide and swing. Evelyn had a room for herself upstairs next to our bedroom. It felt like sheer luxury.

Vivienne was born in 1945 on the 14th October. She was a tiny baby. She was very delicate and in her first years, often sick, but thankfully, she grew stronger. Both girls gave us lots of joy and few sorrows. They were beautiful children — Evelyn, blonde and blue-eyed, Vivienne dark-haired and brown-eyed. I was not a very confident mother at first, and was glad of the help and advice of my next door neighbour, Celia Bradley. She was a good friend to me and I was able to discuss my worries and problems with her. We often spent evenings together with our husbands, listening to music or joining with other neighbours for a play reading in our various homes. We did not worry about going out, but enjoyed these simple pleasures in our homes.

I also had the good fortune of having Abigail Stanton for a neighbour. As far as I know, she was the only other Jewish person in our area. She was like a second mother to me. Her husband James, a lovely man, was not Jewish, but together they brought up their nine children to be practising Jews. I got to

know their two daughters, Esme and Joyce, who were about my age. Perhaps Abigail was suffering from the empty nest syndrome but her kindness to me was beyond the ordinary. She was always there to offer much needed advice and would also insist on helping me with the ironing and mending. When our tennis weekends began, Esme and Joyce would often be our welcomed guests. Sometimes, Abigail would send Aku and me off to the pictures while she babysat our two girls.

The early years of marriage were harmonious. Aku loved music and books. Even after his death I found new books in our library. His passion was to listen to good music, so our girls were brought up with operas, operettas and musicals, which I loved as well. I enjoyed looking after my children and the household. I had help a few mornings a week. I enjoyed baking and cooking, sewing and entertaining.

On Saturday afternoons there was always a tennis game arranged and many Sundays as well. It meant getting up early in the mornings to bake cakes for afternoon tea and straightening the house. I recall many happy Sunday afternoons either on the tennis court or in the garden playing with our children or chatting to friends. Our Jewish friends mingled happily with our non-Jewish neighbours. At times, I resented the fact that I was working so hard while Aku played tennis and played the genial host. I rarely had time to have a game of tennis myself, but that was the role that most women played in the '50s.

Both girls went to kindergarten and to the State school in Murrumbena. They had good friends among the neighbourhood children and enjoyed horse riding. Vivienne brushed and groomed the horses at the local riding school and got free rides in return. Then Aku decided that he wanted both girls to attend

Mount Scopus College; It had just opened in St. Kilda Road. He was not religious, but as we lived in Hughesdale with few Jews close by, he felt that they were being deprived of their Jewish identity. Later on, Mount Scopus moved to Burwood, and they travelled there on the school bus. Both girls stayed to matriculate and they both did very well. Evelyn became head prefect and school captain and Vivienne was tennis champion. Evelyn studied social sciences and became a psychologist and Vivienne was a primary teacher. She taught at Yooralla, a special school for handicapped children. As a mature student, she followed her interests and recently completed her Bachelor of Horticultural Science.

BREAKDOWN

Aku went overseas on business for three months in 1950 and 1951. I had been considering studying art and, since Aku, who could be very demanding, was going to be away a lot, I decided that this was the time to start. At the time, my friends asked me why I wanted to study. The reason was twofold. One was that I was beginning to feel trapped within the limited world of domesticity, and the other was that my relationship with Aku became less and less satisfactory. He enjoyed his soccer club, his trips, books and music, spending a lot of time and money on them. He was available to his family only when it suited him. Art had been my consolation before and now, I turned to it yet again.

At first I thought of studying to become a furniture designer, so that I could find a job, but the head of the Art department at the Caulfield Institute of Technology encouraged me to study art. I'm glad I did. I was in my element studying design, history of art, painting and printmaking. Among the many wonderful teachers under whom I studied were Dr. Hirschfeld Mack from the Bauhaus, Harold Ellis, Kenneth Jack, Karlis Mednis, Margaret Metcalf, Erica McGilchrist and Gunnar Neeme. After a while, I decided that I would like to become an art teacher when my studies ended, so I enrolled part-time at Mercer House Teachers' Training College.

At the same time, we gave haven to a series of immigrants. The first were Eddy and Pepi Bienenstock in 1948. Eddy had

gone to school with Aku, and had survived, hidden in Belgium. They stayed with us for six months and we were glad to have them till they established themselves. Not so successful was Hans' arrival in 1949. I was beside myself with joy to be reunited with him, but Aku was jealous of our closeness, and Hans chose to move after a few weeks. Then, in 1950, Aku brought out his sister, Henriette, from Israel together with her husband, Yizchak, and their fourteen year old son, Alex. They stayed at our place for a couple of months. It turned out to be a nightmare experience for everyone, mainly because the two men didn't get on at all. The strain on my health was enormous, and all the traumas from the past, finally caught up with me.

I developed ulcerative colitis, which later led to an ileostomy and "clergyman's throat" which meant I was not allowed to speak at all while it lasted. The art studies kept me sane. In 1952, Aku's fur business was destroyed by the credit squeeze and the steep rise of sales tax. He had to close his office in the Manchester Unity Building. He then had a severe nervous breakdown. For five dreadful years, Aku spent a great deal of time in bed. He could not face people or any responsibility. It was devastating for him and very hard on me and the girls. He recovered slowly, but never quite got his nerve back again. In 1963, he had a heart attack. He recovered well, and took great care of his health in regard to diet and exercise. For ten years he seemed to hold his own.

TEACHING ART

After five years of part time studies, I graduated with a Certificate in Arts and Crafts. When I mentioned at home that all my fellow students were trying to get teaching positions, Evelyn said, "Mummy, why don't you try as well?" So I did. I found a job at Camberwell Girls' Grammar School teaching Art and Craft. I did not have a car, so I had to get up early to travel from Hughesdale to Camberwell by train and tram. At first teaching was hard for me, especially keeping discipline. But as time progressed, I improved. After three years in Camberwell, I got a position at Shelford Girls' Grammar, where I taught Senior Art, part time. In 1960 I applied for a full time position at Presbyterian Ladies College and was accepted. Both previous schools were good, but no comparison to P.L.C. where the art facilities were marvellous. We had five great studio rooms. I shared an office with two other art teachers with whom I enjoyed excellent rapport.

I had to have very high standards as this was one of the best schools in Melbourne. The head of our department was a former P.L.C. student. I had ten very tough years because of her. She made my life a misery in many small ways. For instance, she enjoyed picking my brains, but whenever I needed a recipe for a paint mixture, she would leave out essential ingredients. She mistook my polite manner for weakness, until finally I stopped being afraid of her. I stood up to her bullying and she left me

alone. The following nine years were a joy. I had some excellent students, some of whom chose art as their career when they left school. I taught Art and Craft in the senior school for nineteen years until my retirement in 1980. I found my work challenging and I think I was respected by students and colleagues alike.

DEATH OF AKU

In 1973 on a Sunday night, November 26th, Aku and I were invited to our good friends, Alwyn and Yetta Samuel. We were really looking forward to this evening as Aku and I liked the company of this couple. Also, Aku knew that his colleague from the fur business, Mr. Briggs, was going to be there as well and hoped that he might discuss resuming business with him. "I can see the light at the end of the tunnel," Aku said to me that morning, meaning that business was improving. The evening arrived. I still remember, it was a warm night and Aku was in a happy frame of mind. We took a taxi there, as we had no car.

The evening started with a bad omen. Rosetta, the daughter-in-law of the Samuels, spilled red wine on her long, white frock. We all sat down for dinner and the conversation was stimulating. Yetta, the hostess, had started to study for a law degree. Her husband was a lawyer. We had a wonderful evening.

Around 11 p.m., all of a sudden, Aku started fighting for breath. He had a massive heart attack and asthma attack. Our host's son, a psychiatrist, called the Mobile Heart Ambulance and Dr. Friedmann. Both were there within minutes, giving CPR (pulmonary resuscitation) to little avail. The ambulance man asked me, "Should I continue with the heart machine? He really is dead." When I looked at Aku, I realised his eyes had no life in them and so I agreed for the machine to be turned off.

My host notified my daughters and sons-in-law. All I recall is that I kissed Aku goodbye when the Chevra Kadisha came and I was taken home to face life alone. The following days were traumatic. I had become widowed at fifty-three.

STARTING AGAIN

Aku died just a week before the end of the school year. This meant six weeks alone at home, grieving for all my losses. Aku had been impossible to live with, but I missed him terribly. I was very restless and stayed with my daughters in turn, only coming home to collect the mail. A colleague of mine from P.L.C., Mathi, asked me over to stay at her place in Croydon for a weekend. She lived far away, yet her husband picked me up and drove me there and back. I remember that weekend with gratitude because, at that time when I was hardly coping, their kindness meant so much to me.

Then slowly, the world came back into focus. I took a few extra driving lessons, since I already had my licence, and bought a second-hand car. That made life a lot easier. I went back to Caulfield Institute of Technology (now called Monash University) three nights a week, to update my knowledge in painting, lithography and etching. My first paintings during that time expressed a lot of the anger that I had repressed. I remember painting a lot of cacti in sharp primary colours. Gradually, my life and my work became happier. I threw myself into my work and started doing my best work in oils. My teachers were very critical but just, and I learnt a lot. I painted on pure linen canvas that took three days of preparation. I had to cover the canvas with rabbit-skin glue which had to be heated and then applied to the pure linen. The smell was indescribable but a canvas thus

prepared is a sheer delight to work on.

The confidence I got from my years at the Caulfield Institute made me knowledgeable in all painting and printing techniques. In my lithography and etching classes, I produced some good pieces. One of the most successful etchings, "View towards Melbourne", I made when sitting in the garden of the Arts Centre Gallery Restaurant. It has historical value now, because the cityscape has changed so quickly. So many more high-rise buildings and skyscrapers! I continued going to life classes which were privately arranged at my fellow artist Ruth Spivakovsky's home or mine.

After my retirement, I was busier than ever. I taught after-school students from Yavneh, Beth Rivkah, Mount Scopus and former PLC students. I even gave a class to male students, professional people who wanted to get back into art. I became a member of the Victorian Arts Society, the Malvern Artists' Society and the Bezalel Jewish Art Society. I took part in many group exhibitions, sold some of my work and got known. I undertook a number of overseas study trips from 1974-86. I visited Italy, France, England, Greece, Israel, Austria, Switzerland and the US. I also attended the Atelier Artistique at Seguret in Provence. After an exhibition at Eckersly, I had a one woman exhibition at Malvern Artists' Society which was opened by Ken Bandmann in 1985. Then I exhibited all my work done in France at The Little Gallery in Village Walk in June 1986.

In 1987, I had a very large one-woman exhibition at the Caulfield Arts Centre, opened by the Mayor of Caulfield, where I exhibited over seventy pieces of work. All these exhibitions were very successful and it is always a great joy for me to come into houses where my work is displayed. My family was wonderful.

My grandchildren helped in many different ways: hanging the paintings, passing refreshments and later with the dismantling. My two daughters and son-in-law Ruben helped and supported me in whatever way was needed. Ruben has helped me in more ways than I can possibly mention. I am very lucky to have such a generous and loving son-in-law.

I have been grateful for what Australia has offered me, and I sought ways that I could give something back in return. For one year, I became a voluntary guide at the Children's Museum in Swanston Street. I enjoyed my work there: I showed children detailed models of the ear, the eye and the digestive system which was very interesting for me as well. Later on, I became voluntary guide at the Jewish Museum in St. Kilda Road, then part of the Toorak Synagogue. I took groups of students into the synagogue and answered many questions about our religion.

Two years ago, I discovered the Ardoch Youth Foundation and helped to supervise ten year olds, mostly migrants, with their reading and sums. Last year I helped the Art teacher at St. Kilda Primary in Brighton Road and enjoyed working with these lively youngsters. I liked the teacher's approach. She is very competent and I have learnt from her new ideas, techniques and new materials to use. You are never too old to learn.

COMMEMORATION IN BERLIN 1995

It was 1995 – fifty years since World War II. Berlin was commemorating the end of the war and invited people from all over the world to come to Berlin for a week. This coincided with the opening of the Prince Regent Street Synagogue. It was to be a festive occasion with dignitaries from Germany and Israel in attendance. My friend Egon who was born in Berlin was amongst the invited and was allowed to take me along as his companion.

I would like to describe my impression of that "festive" evening. We had been given entry cards and told not to bring cameras or umbrellas, a reminder that this was not Australia. We were taken by bus and driven through a very poor district. The people in the streets seemed to stare at our bus angrily. I was feeling somewhat paranoid by then, and had the feeling they knew we were Jewish visitors from overseas.

The bus stopped at a large square, which was part of the half-finished synagogue. Many seats had been set up facing a raised platform where there was an orchestra and a podium for speakers. The square was surrounded by two or three storey houses. On the roofs, we could see security guards with machine guns facing us. There was an area with portable metal toilets to one side and I made a mental note that if there was any shooting, I would rush into them. My mind went back to when I was living in Berlin as a seventeen year old, living in fear and wondering whether I would be able to get out of Germany in time! Thank

goodness, nothing extraordinary happened.

There was music, an exhibition of the progress of the half-finished synagogue, and many speeches. It started to rain, and Egon and I moved to a large tree for shelter. After a while, having listened to endless speeches from Chancellor Kohl and other dignitaries, I suggested to Egon that we leave. We found our bus nearby and waited there till we were taken back to our hotel. I would like to mention that I never wanted to go back to Germany but Egon was not so well and I felt obliged to accompany him. It took a whole year for my health to recover. I live with an ileostomy and manage quite well, but the stress of being in Berlin again made my previous health problems flair up again.

We spent a week in Berlin. I couldn't even bring myself to visit the street where I had lived. Next, Egon and I flew to Frankfurt to visit Egon's cousin, Hans. Roberto, Hans' son, was at the airport to meet us. We drove in his car to Nidderau, a small township near Frankfurt. When we arrived at his parents' place, Hans Alexander and his Italian wife met us at the entrance of their two storey villa. It was set in a lovely garden with two big lilac trees in full bloom. This lovely place was the setting for an unlovely situation.

Since arriving in Germany, we were finding a "worm in every apple". Our hosts showed us to our room and told us that in an hour they were expecting friends for coffee. Hans said, if they asked us where we were from, to say we had come from Australia, but not to mention that Berlin had invited us. We were not to say how long we had been living in Australia and not to mention that we were Jewish. We felt very indignant, but complied by being very cagey in what we said to his neighbours.

He was hiding his Jewishness and chose to live with subterfuge and shame. It was not our business to change matters.

The Alexanders were generous hosts. They showed us the Rhine River and many of its castles nestled on top of the mountains. We saw the Lorelei and went on a special cable-car. Underneath were vineyards and a famous monument where the Nazis had often chosen to meet. We stopped at a café on our way home. I visited the bathroom and had to cross a room where there were people having an early dinner. I got some hostile looks. I thought that I looked inconspicuous enough wearing neat slacks and a blouse, but I'm sure that I looked like a foreigner to them. None of the women were wearing trousers. I think that there is a deep strain of xenophobia in the German makeup, which they can't seem to give up.

Before travelling to Berlin, I had written to Ulla, a classmate from State school who had been in touch with me for over ten years. When she heard that I would be near Frankfurt, she arranged a weekend in Hoheim for those classmates who were able to make it. The Alexanders drove us to Hoheim, in the Taunust mountains, where Ulla had booked us into a guesthouse. We were joined by a former student of my late father, and his wife, and by three other former classmates of mine. We caught up with details of our lives since the war. One woman, who was a craft teacher, said, "Oh, how we suffered when the Russians came!" Ulla looked at me and said, "Others have suffered more." It was impossible to have a candid conversation and the afternoon passed in small talk.

Perhaps I might have regretted it had I not gone back. At least it gave me a chance to visit my father's grave at the cemetery in Weissensee. We were taken there by bus. Egon and I went to the

office to find out where my father was buried. I was given a photocopied plan with the exact location but it took us over two hours to find it. That particular part was overgrown with ivy. The names of the gravestone were faint, almost impossible to read.

I was almost ready to give up when Egon spotted my father's grave. As I have said before, I was able to do some belated grieving. I was so relieved, so grateful, that my trip had not been in vain. After taking a photograph of the old grave and stone, we walked back to the office. I gave them some money to tidy it up and to plant some pansies. They promised to send me a photograph of the grave, which they did. Last year, I received a letter from my father's student. He had travelled to Berlin to visit my father's grave and he wrote that it made him feel good to be able to do so.

I was so happy to fly home and started feeling better the moment I saw other Australians on the plane.

SUMMING UP

At eighty years of age, I am still able to lead a busy life. I enjoy going to concerts, plays, the opera and exhibitions. I do water exercises, garden, work on my art and give lessons, though not as many as before. I am actively involved in my chapter at B'nai B'rith and enjoy the fellowship and the activities. Life certainly has been interesting.

My grandchildren mean a lot to me. I love them so dearly. They are all so special in their different ways and if I were to enumerate their many qualities, it would take another book. They are my joy and consolation. My lovely eldest grand-daughter Miriam is no longer with us, and she has left a continuing ache in all our hearts. She had everything to live for. She was sensitive, artistic, good looking, and had many friends. Unfortunately, she inherited a depressive illness, I think from both sides of the family, and passed away at nineteen. I miss her every day. My great-grandson, Aryeh, Noah and Timna's child, is now almost one year old, and when I look at him I see in him the promise of continuity of our family and of our people, and I am thrilled and touched.

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Marianne Roth was born in 1920 in Upper Silesia, Germany. Her story encompasses much of the German-Jewish experience in the 20th Century, its social and intellectual prominence and the slow, inexorable rise of Nazism that swept it away. She describes her idyllic childhood that comes to an end in the '30s and her escape, alone, to Australia, aged nineteen.

In spite of the loneliness and hardships, a new life is forged. And throughout her life, the love and practice of art has nourished and sustained her. Vividly told and memorable.



Makor Jewish Community Library